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ABSTRACT

The recommendations in this document resulted from discussions by the Georgia Right to Read Advisory Council and outline the need for an effective, diagnostic-prescriptive teaching program in Georgia schools. Separate recommendations are made for each of the following areas: management design--initial steps that must be taken, in order to overcome reading problems in the state of Georgia; textbook selection; coordination of reading instruction; courses in reading instruction that should be required for teachers before they can be certified to teach; school standards; and staff development. An appendix lists competencies that teachers should possess in order to teach reading effectively. (GW)

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IMPERATIVES

for the

IMPROVEMENT OF READING EDUCATION

in the

STATE OF GEORGIA

GEORGIA RIGHT TO READ ADVISORY COUNCIL

1976-77

Georgia Department of Education
Office of Instructional Services
Atlanta

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RATIONALE

Reading has been the focus of special attention during the past decade. Critics single out reading as a weak point in the educational process continually asking, "Why Can't Johnny Read?". The public is now demanding that all students learn to read, preferably in the elementary years, and certainly before graduation.

Although the primary responsibility for reading instruction has been assigned to educational institutions, reading is a cooperative responsibility involving the home, the school, and the community. In Georgia, the Right to Read Program of the Department of Education has recognized and accepted the challenge to teach all to read. Thus through the discussions of the Georgia Right to Read Advisory Council recommendations are being presented to unite efforts of all segments of society to assist in overcoming the problem of the inability of all of our citizens to read.

Reading is a process, an essential skill area which is an integral aspect of all learning, and, as such, permeates the total curriculum. Reading as a skill relates both to educational needs and to recreational and leisure activities.

Based in these conceptual considerations, the following recommendations outline the need for an effective, diagnostic-prescriptive teaching program and multiple instructional techniques. They further identify specific activities and those responsible for their implementation.

The ultimate goal of reading instruction and of the Georgia Right to Read Effort is literacy for every citizen of Georgia. In the absence of a comprehensive state plan for reading, every school system should be encouraged to adopt the precepts of the Georgia Right to Read effort as their model.

A MANAGEMENT DESIGN FOR READING INSTRUCTION

The initial steps which must be taken in order to overcome the reading problems in the State of Georgia are as follows:

1. Establish reading as a priority area in education at both the state and local levels. This commitment must be supported with resources, both financial and human.

2. Coordinate instructional activities which relate to reading within the Georgia Department of Education, across the various state agencies, and within the counties and local schools.

3. Involve the community and lay public in activities to improve reading at the pre-school through adult levels.

These initial steps are simply stated but each requires that the leadership at all levels demonstrate a commitment to overcoming the serious reading problems which exist within the State of Georgia. This commitment must be more than a verbal commitment; there must be action. Some action steps which are suggested as a beginning include:

--Develop a state plan for reading which specifically identifies the needs and outlines procedures for meeting these needs. Persons within the Georgia Department of Education would be involved in this task as well as persons from other state agencies, school systems, and the lay public.

--Establish specific standards for reading achievement which counties should strive to achieve.

--Require that all reading teachers, including Title I teachers, be certified in reading.

--Provide training programs to parents to learn how they can assist the schools in teaching reading.

--Provide radio and television spots as well as printed materials which may aid children in their readiness for reading.

--Require counties to develop a plan for teaching pre-reading skills in kindergarten and first grade in order to better prepare the students for reading.

--Encourage schools to provide students and teachers with time during the school day for leisure reading.

--Develop improved procedures for meeting the needs of the secondary student and adult with reading problems.

--Require that all content teachers have training in the teaching of reading as related to their content area.

TEXTBOOK SELECTION

Textbook selection committees are faced with a variety of choices because of the many materials on the market today. They are often frustrated because materials on a recommended grade level are not readable for the average or above average reader, much less for the slow student. Authors use different organizational patterns and in many instances fail to highlight the concept they are trying to present. New vocabulary without proper introduction to enable understanding; sentences packed with concepts; and other aspects of reading comprehension cause both teacher and students much frustration.

Because of the crucial importance of providing quality instructional materials in the areas of language arts and reading for students in our state, the need to provide a wide range of those materials in order to meet the reading needs of all students, and the potential influence which the State Textbook List has upon school systems considering the purchase of Reading/Language Arts materials, the State Right to Read Advisory Council respectfully offers the following recommendations in the hope that they might strengthen the present state textbook adoption procedures and be of value to the adoption committees at the local system level:

(1) Every publishing company submitting materials for possible adoption should submit specific information on the range of reading difficulty of the materials (approximate reading levels) and/or learner verification studies and piloting reports. All available information on the materials should be submitted.

(2) The State Department of Education should contract with experts in the field of study under consideration for textbook adoption to carefully evaluate (from a content area standpoint) the textbook materials and make those reports available to the Textbook Adoption Committee for consideration.

(3) As an alternative to Item #2, an Advisory Committee of content area experts should be appointed to evaluate the textbook materials and offer their input to the Textbook Adoption Committee.

(4) Strong consideration should be given to extending the deliberation/evaluation period for the Textbook Adoption Committee from one year to two years.

(5) All criteria utilized in the evaluation and selection of textbook materials should be highly specific, be published, and be disseminated throughout the state.

(6) Much additional effort should be made to disseminate information on textbook expenditure policies to all teachers in local schools throughout the state.

COORDINATION OF READING INSTRUCTION

In order to bring about necessary changes, educators must realize the necessity of viewing reading instruction in a more comprehensive light. Presently reading instruction is fragmented by scheduling and ever broadening content area responsibilities that pressure teachers. We must come to grips with the importance of helping every youngster develop maximum skills in reading, and helping teachers to provide for reading skills development in all instructional areas. Therefore, the members of the State Right to Read Advisory Council offer the following recommendations:

(1) Reading should be viewed as an integral part of the total language arts instruction program, i.e. it should form the core of that program. Instruction in composition, spelling, listening, speaking should be organized around instruction in reading skills.

(2) In local textbook adoption procedures, priority should be given to materials which attempt to integrate the language arts.

(3) Those in authority should require evidence of teachers of the integration of reading/language arts in their lesson plans.

(4) Reading and language arts should <u>not</u> be taught as separate subjects in grades K-7, but should be combined with all other subject areas.

(5) Composition should receive a strong focus in the effort to improve skill in reading and students should be provided with many more opportunities to write.

CERTIFICATION AND READING

For many years the State of Georgia did not require that teachers have training in the teaching of reading to be certified. In recent years one course has been required for elementary certification but none for secondary certification. Therefore, Georgia has great numbers of teachers who have little or no training in the teaching of reading. As a direct result of these circumstances, Georgia has great numbers of children who are not able to read up to their expected level.

Studies have been done for years to determine the best methods for teaching reading, the best materials and the best organizational systems. Repeatedly in these studies it has been shown that all these are minor factors when compared to one other factor - the teacher. Obviously the principal, the librarian, the supervisor, the superintendent and the parents have important roles to play, but the thing that make or break the reading program are the skills, abilities and attitudes of the teacher.

More than ninety-five percent of the children who fail first grade in Georgia fail because of reading deficiencies. Twenty-five percent of the children who fail in the seventh grade also have severe reading deficiencies.

Reading skills and attitudes are absolutely central to success in school in all subject matter areas including mathematics. No matter how attractive the aids nor how ingenious the teacher, the child who cannot read cannot adequately deal with subject matter areas as he or she progresses through school.

There is evidence to support the contention that it is not enough to teach the child in reading class and expect him or her to transfer the skills to all other classes. Every teacher must teach reading. This slogan has been around for a long time, but until it is implemented we shall continue to have children and young people in Georgia who can never reach their full potential.

Taking reading courses does not guarantee, of course, that a teacher will be a good reading teacher, but it will increase the chances enormously. Learning to read is an extremely complex cognitive and linguistic process. Rarely is a teacher without formal training in reading able to adequately teach all his or her students to read effectively.

A few institutions in Georgia have for the past few years been requiring ten quarter hours in the teaching of reading of elementary majors and recommending at least one course for secondary school majors.

More than a dozen states already require two reading courses of all elementary majors. Eight states require one reading course for all secondary school majors, and two states require two.

The children and young people of Georgia do not read as well as the children and young people in most other states. Part, though certainly not all, of the reason for this problem is that there has not been enough required training in the teaching of reading for all teachers.

It is recommended that for future certification the following minimum requirements be set:

1. For certification in early elementary education (K-4): Ten quarter hours or the equivalent; five in developmental reading, kindergarten through grade four and five in corrective reading with a practicum base dealing with children in kindergarten through grade four.

2. For middle school certification (4-8): Ten quarter hours or the equivalent; five dealing with foundations of middle school reading and reading in the content areas, grades four through eight and five in corrective reading with a practicum base dealing with children in grades four through eight.

3. For secondary school certification (7-12): Five quarter hours or the equivalent dealing with foundations of reading instruction in the secondary school and teaching reading in the content areas, grades seven through twelve. Secondary English teachers, however, should be required the same number of hours in reading as teachers of grades 4-8 since English teachers are often delegated the responsibility for teaching reading.

There is a widespread discontent among administrators and supervisors with their own lack of knowledge and skills in helping teachers to be better teachers of reading. There are also indications that teachers would like administrators to provide more suggestions and help than they are now providing in the area of reading instruction.

It is recommended that at least five quarter hours of reading instruction be required for future certification as an administrator or supervisor in Georgia. It is recommended that such a course be in the supervision and administration of reading programs. It is also recommended that certification requirements for new elementary and secondary principals be written to include demonstration of the knowledge with which to determine the competency of a teacher of reading and the adequacy of a reading program.

There is a greatly increasing number of learning disabilities specialists taking their places in the school programs of the state. Many of them spend seventy-five percent or more of their instructional time trying to help learning disabled children improve their reading.

Many majors in learning disabilities elect to take reading courses, but some do not and no reading courses are presently required.

It is recommended that ten quarter hours or the equivalent of graduate level reading courses be required for certification as a learning disability teacher. Five of those hours should be in diagnosis and/or treatment of reading difficulties with a practicum base.

In spite of the best efforts in developmental and corrective reading programs a few children and young people will become severe cases of reading disabilities. Remedial reading programs should be limited to these profound reading cases where a great discrepancy exists between potential and reading performance and where the case is complicated by emotional, perceptual, neurological, environmental, physical or other problems. It is recommended that remedial programs be conducted by reading specialists with at least a Masters degree and no less than twenty-five quarter hours or the equivalent in reading education.

Further, we strongly endorse competencies presented to the Ad Hoc Committee on Reading of the Georgia Teacher Education Council, as minimal competencies for all teachers certified in Georgia. (See Apendix A).

SCHOOL STANDARDS

A major concern of the State Right-To-Read Advisory Council is the development of reading competence in Georgia school students. For students to achieve this competency and to experience enjoyment and success in reading, certain standards must be written and implemented in the school systems throughout Georgia.

Standard One

Each school system must recognize that the skills development status of each individual student must be considered regardless of his grade placement, general achievement, or apparent ability. Increased emphasis must be placed on pacing learning to meet individual student needs through implementing a continuous progress reading program.

The scope and sequence is based upon the concept of needs - goals - and objectives, with the objective accomplishing the goal and the goal meeting the needs which must be met in order to be able to read (for example, Word Recognition Skills). In order to attain these needs, certain goals must first be met (for example, develop and utilize structural analysis skills). The attainment of stated goals is reached by meeting the criteria of the various behavioral objectives (for example, given words and alternative syllabic divisions, the student marks answers designating correct syllabication with 95% accuracy).

In order to be a standard school system, a reading continuum must be written by a system-wide committee and a copy approved by a Statewide Advisory Committee.

Standard Two

In order to be a standard school and/or system, a formal plan of implementation and utilization must be on file with the State Department of Education. Such a plan must include at least the following elements:

A. School staff and community awareness plan:
B. Copy of implementation evaluation plan:
C. Staff development plans to insure members of school staff are competent:
D. Review plans for evaluating present instructional materials:
E. Proposed procedure for identification of new materials needed to supplement instructional programs:
F. Proposed plans for assessing student progress, the effectiveness of the instructional materials, and the critical staff development needs.

Standard Three

In order for schools and school systems to be standard, a formal report must be filed with the State Department of Education on/or before February 1st of each year detailing the following:

A review of the progress each school and system has made regarding the meeting of the identified needs in the area of reading and reading instruction.

Standard 23

A. Consideration should be given to the broadening of the Standard 23 effort to all schools--whether or not they have shown progress.

B. Standard 23 should include a review component.

C. Standard 23 evaluations should tie-in with Competency-Based Teacher Education administrators' on-site evaluation and/or with comprehensive studies.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

A. All schools should be required (through standards) to have staff development in Reading (and in Learning/Study Skills) in content areas.

B. Content area teachers should have the opportunity to participate in staff development related to reading.

C. Modules should be developed which are specifically designed to teach competency requirements for principals.

D. Staff development should tie-in with the Superintendent's plan for leadership training of administrators and principals.

Appendix A

COMPETENCIES IN READING

(as recommended by the Ad Hoc Committee on Reading of the Teacher Education Council, 1976-77)

1. Diagnosis of learning needs

   The teacher should be able to determine...

   a. functional and/or instructional reading level.
   b. the reading content of interest to each particular student and the student's attitude toward reading.
   c. the particular reading skills appropriate to the content which a student is learning and which are likely to be useful to him in his later life.

2. Planning activities to meet learning needs

   The teacher should be able...

   a. to develop a set of goals with the learner.
   b. to schedule learning activities in appropriate sequences.
   c. prescribe materials and plan activities at the proper level and addressed to the appropriate interests and needs based upon diagnostic information.

3. Selecting materials for learning and instruction

   The teacher should be able...

   a. to identify and utilize materials of learner interest.
   b. to identify and utilize materials at learners instructional level.
   c. to identify and utilize materials for developing appropriate reading skills.
   d. to identify the readability levels of books.
   e. to develop appropriate instructional materials.

4. Employing teaching methods appropriate for the learner, his needs, the planned activities and the materials

   The teacher is able to teach a directed reading lesson and to employ the language experience method as well as a variety of other teaching methods appropriate for the learner, his needs, the planned activities, and the materials.

5. Establishing a classroom standard of behavior and such operating procedures as will facilitate learning to read

   The teacher should be able to...

   a. arrange for routine tasks to be completed efficiently without disruption.
   b. develop student self control and maintain the alternative of teacher control.
   c. positively reinforce appropriate behavior.
   d. arrange room for efficient conduct of learning activities.
   e. develop positive self-concept on the part of the student.

6. Evaluating student reading performance.

   The teacher should be able to...

   a. administer and interpret standardized tests.
   b. develop and administer criterion-referenced tests.
   c. determine skills needing refinement.
   d. identify impact of emotional, attitudinal, and psychological states upon test performance.

7. Evaluating their own effectiveness as reading teachers.

   The teacher should be able to...

   a. clearly state goals.
   b. systematically gather learner data.
   c. compare results of student evaluations achieved after certain teaching performance.

PERSONAL COMPETENCIES

Every teacher will be personally competent...

1. in reading (the method of assessment to be determined by this reading committee).

2. in composition (the method of assessing this competency to be determined).

3. in the utilization of references, research tools, and media.

4. in appropriate subject matter areas.